

& the nominal star — Clark Gable  
with that hammy grin of his  
to the very last  
he's the weakest link  
but compared to the crap  
he'd been churning out  
there were moments at least  
when he was ok  
it's black & white  
decidedly downbeat  
but I must say  
it stands up remarkably well

#### ONE FOR TRANSFORMATION

in three stages  
let's take Dick Powell  
a sappy tenor in the '30s  
a very knowing Phil Marlowe in the '40s  
a director in the '50s  
ever see The Conqueror?  
John Wayne as Ghengis Khan?  
Dick Powell directed it  
on a nuclear testing site in '55  
all the principals got cancer  
including Dick  
John Wayne  
Susan Hayward  
Agnes Moorehead  
Pedro Armendariz  
all for a ridiculous picture  
so what's the point?  
a guy who wanted to be more  
than an average singer in film musicals  
graduates  
to further absurdities

#### CAUGHT OFFGUARD

my father leaned in my direction  
& planted a kiss on the side of my face  
told me good luck  
that was it  
he was off  
I can remember the most trivial dates  
not that one  
Spring of '61  
that's all I remember  
7 years later  
landing at JFK from Italy



it was only logical to look him up  
in Brooklyn  
except he wasn't there  
a neighbor told me which hospital  
it was major surgery  
but he was back home  
to see me off  
he leaned into the car window & kissed me  
unlike 7 years before  
the tears were right there & unexpected  
it didn't change a damn thing between us  
the Miles Davis quintet of 1961  
burns up the room  
with their very special version of So What?

#### PUT TO THE TEST

he didn't stack up too well  
13 years after his death  
I buy a Dunkin Donuts calendar  
the founder of that company  
was a friend of the family  
I read the little sketch about him  
& think of my father  
& how little  
he was able to manage  
before he failed  
as a husband  
as a business man  
as a father  
but not as a person  
people loved him  
he was so charming apparently  
I was there  
at the end  
his friends were devoted  
I could only wonder  
if they weren't in worse shape  
than he ever was

— John Levin

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